

BOOK REVIEWS

AN ESSAY TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION.

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By Charlotte M. Mason (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. 10s. 6d. net).

THIS, Miss Charlotte Mason's last book, which she did not live to see in print, in many ways sums up her teaching and her message. It is a book of much wisdom, and refreshing alike for its respect for children and for its respect for experience. Miss Mason had studied education too long to be carried away by stunts and panaceas, however seductive. She had the true pioneer's suspicion of seeming short cuts. She knew, like Sir Rabinathan Tagore, that the process of growing can only be done by the grower; and, like Ruskin, that the mind of a child may be trusted to take or reject according to its needs; that knowledge cannot be digested in tabloid form, but the tabloids made never so skillfully; that out of a "whole big book" a child "may not get more than half-a-dozen of those ideas upon which his spirit thrives, and that such ideas occur "in unexpected places and unrecognised forms." "One of our presumptions," she declared, "is that we venture to offer opinions to children (and to older persons) instead of ideas. The mind feeds on ideas, and therefore children should have a generous curriculum."

Her Faith in the Child.

Further, Miss Mason cherished a steadfast belief in the child. She realised clearly what most teachers fail to realise (or, at all events, to embody in their system of teaching), that children are well able to deal with ideas. Therefore, she placed little reliance on the ordinary catechetical methods employed in the classroom. Much of the questioning to which children are subjected is a hindrance rather than a help to their understanding (for Nature designed them to ask rather than to answer questions), and she does not spoil their tempers as it would the temper of the most phlegmatic grown-up, this is only because children are so extraordinarily patient—"Patient of contradiction as a child" is the simile Cowper chose when he had to describe the humility of the truly great, and it is one which teachers will do

well to ponder. Miss Mason's method is one of narration, oral and written. She realised that no one can recount anything without considerable mental effort—the mind having constantly to put questions to itself if it would proceed. In other words, she realised that Literature, as Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch told a Cambridge audience, is an art to be practised; and that in History, as Lord Acton told another Cambridge audience, one must "learn as much by writing as by reading."

Her Teaching of Literature.

In teaching literature it would be difficult to improve upon Miss Mason's method. It places the child and the author in direct contact, without the intervention of a third party; and on its expression side, the narrative, it makes appeal to two fundamental instincts of childhood, the desire to imitate and the desire to create. She anticipated Mr. Wells in insisting upon some general history (ancient, European, and Colonial) being included in her curriculum. She is still in front of most teachers in including systematic study of pictures and art. If her view that "the approach to science, as to other subjects, should be more or less literary" wins less general acceptance, we cannot, on the other hand, claim that, by other methods we have attained to any marked degree of success in teaching science. The common result of the ordinary methods is that, while the student may acquire some ability to measure, experiment, and observe, he shows a lamentable lack of knowledge of larger principles, broad conceptions, and everyday applications. Miss Mason deplored the "fatal and quite unnecessary divorce between science and the humanities," and few can quarrel with her declaration that "the only sound method of teaching science is to afford a due combination of field or laboratory work with such literary comments and applications as the subject affords."

But this book is much more than an exposition of any system or method. It is a treatise on education itself—a book of mellow wisdom, clearly and beautifully written, in which no teacher, however widely he differs from Miss Mason in outlook, can fail to find much to arrest him. One could quote from page after page, but three quotations, deal-

ing with marks, motives, and psychoanalysis, must suffice:—

"A school may be working hard, not for love of knowledge, but for love of marks, our old enemy; and then young faces are not serene and joyous, but eager, restless, apt to look anxious and worried; the children do not sleep well and are cross; are sullen or in tears if anything goes wrong, and are, generally, difficult to manage. When this is the case there is too much oxygen in the air; they are breathing a too stimulating atmosphere, . . . the doctors probably advise that so-and-so should 'run wild' for a year. Poor little soul, at the very moment when he is most in need of knowledge for his sustenance he is left to prey upon himself! No wonder the nervous symptoms become worse."

Her Views on Discipline.

"Fear is no longer the acknowledged basis of school discipline; we have methods more subtle than the mere terrors of the law. Love is one of these. The person of winning personality attracts his pupils (or hers), who will do anything for his sake, and are fond and eager in all their ways, docile to that point where personality is submerged, and they live on the smiles, perish on the averted looks of the adored teacher. Parents look on with a smile, and think that all is well; but Hob or Mary is losing that growing time which should make a self-dependent, self-ordered person, and is day by day becoming a parasite who can only go as he is carried, the easy prey of fanatic or demagogue."

"Education implies a continuous going forth of the mind; but whatever induces introspection or any form of self-consciousness holds up, as it were, the intellectual powers and brings progress to a standstill. . . . It may be that the mind as well as the body has its regions where *non me tangere* is a counsel of expiency; and, by the time we have dealt with those functions of the mind which we know, we may find ourselves in a position to formulate that which we certainly do not possess, a science—should it not be a philosophy?—of education."

These three quotations may serve to show something of Miss Mason's independence of outlook; they probably are not the best that could have been chosen. The value of the book is enhanced by an excellent index.

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF JAMES RHOADES.

COLLECTED POEMS.

By JAMES RHOADES. (T. Fisher Unwin, 7s. 6d.)

JAMES RHOADES (1841-1923) was one of those poets of our time who, like T. E. Brown and F. W. H. Myers, was also actively engaged in education.

Rhoades was a fairly prolific writer. He is, perhaps, best known for his translations of Virgil, the *Georgics*, done while he was at Sherborne, and his great translation of the *Aeneid* (both now in the "The World's Classics"). He is remembered, too, by many for his collaboration in Mr. Louis N. Parker's Pageants, for which he wrote many fine choruses and lyrics, and in which he even acted. Quite a number of works stand to his credit, though only one—"The Training of the Imagination"—written in prose. His friends have done well to bring together many of his poems in a collected edition, and the reader will find much to satisfy and some things to rest upon in the book just published. It rings true, for Rhoades had an invincible faith in the inherent goodness of his fellow men, and was one of those few who succeeded in making a poem of his own life. "He writes what he is, and he is what he writes," said one of his critics of him while he was yet at Sherborne. The same critic commended his sense of fun: "he can laugh with the youngest." He was always ready to take off his hat to those who can make mirth of us, as the famous lines on Artemus Ward prove:—

Nay, if aught be sure, what can be surer,
Than that earth's good decays not with
earth?

And of all the heart's springs none are
purer.

Then the springs of the fountains of
mirth?

He that sounds them has pierced the heart's
hollows,

The places where tears are and deep;
For the foam flakes that dance in life's shall-

lows,
Are wrung from life's deep.

Catholicity of Taste.

Lewis Carroll, in his inimitably neat handwriting (a writing as beautiful as Rhoades' own) used, when his fancy moved him, to make indexes of favourite books as he studied them. The present reviewer, who once owned a copy of Huxley's *Physiology*, so indexed by the author of *Alice in Wonderland*, has amused himself by indexing similarly, under themes and subjects, these *Collected Poems* of Rhoades. The index reveals the catholicity of Rhoades' tastes—how interested he was in Nature, in men and women, in the events of every day, in music, and how deeply religious he was. His conviction that it is thought that is the builder of the mind occurs again and again, right on to the last poem in the book, the lines written on his eightieth birthday:—

For this is the riddle of life laid bare,
That, as a man thinketh, so is he,
From hour to hour, and day by day,
Whatever the final goal may be.

And, side by side with the constructive power of thought, Rhoades held that—

In life's hill-journey, how's't'rait
And stern the rock-hewn pass may be,
Time's blackest boulder-chinks are lit
With foam-white threads of memory.

He touches the gift of remembering always with peculiar delicacy, as in the sonnets "After the Funeral" and "Shall I forget thee when the Spring comes back?" Here are the first and last stanzas of the poem called "Memory" (Memory is speaking):—

I am born of the early sweet shadows,
Mid the bubbling of birds and of streams,
As morn breaks the mists from thy dreams.
I move through the feet of Aurora,
Fair am I, as the garments of eve;
Yet pale, like the garments of eve;
I am Cora, and I am Pandora;
To heal with my gifts or to grieve . . .

Not of earth is the succour I send you,
Oh! ye creatures of transient breath!
As an angel of light I attend you,
To the gloom of the gateway of Death:
But I pass from his shadowy portal,
To finish what first I began—
Making radiant with footsteps immortal
The path of ephemeral man.

There is another theme in which Rhoades was deeply interested, the theme of children and childhood. But we forbear to quote from the haunting "Song of the Children," from the haunting "The Well-known Road of English Verse on Infancy and Childhood in the Golden Treasury Series.